

6. Jordon Sims: Global Advantage

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00:01 Jordon Sims: The PMI approach to each of those different little pockets, whether be defense acquisition in the government, systems engineering, tech innovation, you name it, we have the ability to be a one-size-fits-all application.

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00:13 S?: From the Washington DC chapter of the Project Management Institute, this is PM Point of View, the podcast that looks at project management from all the angles. Here's your host, Kendall Lott.

00:23 Kendall Lott: In this podcast series, we have heard the points of view of executives and thought leaders on project management. So I wanted to find someone at the Project Management Institute's Global Operations Center, the mothership, who could tell us what PMI thinks of the value and of the future of project management. And of course, what's in it for our chapter members and credential holders. I found the guy who connects the dots. From the global economy, to efficiency improvements, to the role of project management in strategic behaviour, he has the answers.

00:53 JS: My name is Jordan Sims, and I'm the director for Organization Relations and Programs at PMI, and all of our government and business relations around the globe, the US, Canada, Latin America, and Australasia, and then also, the global executive council.

01:07 KL: So when you talk about the relations with corporations and government, the two big branches there, what does that mean? What's the scope of that?

01:14 JS: Cultivating the culture within an organization, whether that be a leading private sector corporation or a public federal agency, or working with parliamentary bodies and legislative bodies on developing policy that champions project management, essentially. So if we were to basically put it into a one-line success story outcome, KPI metric, whatever value you wanna place on that, it's having a industry-leading organization or federal body attribute their success to project management.

01:42 KL: So you're looking for success stories?

01:43 JS: Basically, yeah, we try to highlight pockets of excellence within the federal government. 'Cause there are places, for example, in the US Federal Government, that they do things very well as it relates to project, program and portfolio management. And we try to call attention to those

positive success stories as examples of what can be replicated and amplified elsewhere.

02:01 KL: So that's really interesting, because I was thinking that you are more on the front end about trying to set up the need for project management, that which this seems to still be doing. But you're really focusing on where it's happened and getting them to recognize it themselves.

02:13 JS: Yes and no, it's a two-pronged approach. We're able to identify dollars being wasted, which is technically a negative argument. So for example, in 2014, based on about 2,600 global respondents around the globe across public and private sector in all regions and all industries, you're looking at \$109 million per \$1 billion invested, US, in projects and programs, that's essentially being wasted. That's on average. What's also interesting is the focus that the CEO's been doing. He travels the world, and then works with a lot of these industry leaders that we're able to connect him with, is a focus on strategic initiative management. So when we start looking at that business impact, it would be negligent to not pay attention to the fact that strategy and business plans or government policy, in terms of that strategy, the role that that plays in overall execution.

02:58 JS: So what we've really been focusing on over the last couple of years now is highlighting the gap, or what we refer to as the chasm, between strategy development and strategy execution. And as these organizations get larger and larger, and you start crafting strategy within the C-suite, for example, and start pushing that down to the organization for execution, a lot of that gets diluted across the many multiple business divisions, time zones, and everything else that that organization covers. 44% of strategic initiatives now, globally, are actually meeting their business intent as they were crafted, 56% are not. When you start thinking about, depending on the size of the organization and who's clueing in on this, some of those budgets, based on those strategic initiatives, that's a huge amount of wastage.

03:40 KL: So from your perspective, as members, should we be talking about project management in this way, as a strategic mechanism? Is that proper? Is it the right way to say that?

03:50 JS: What we try to do is, in terms of the value we drive to members via this organizational outreach is, by cultivating that culture it ultimately allows the organizations to truly leverage the skill sets of those members and credential holders that they have within their ranks, at whatever levels those are, whether that's internal or whether there are contractors and vendors supporting the supply chain or cycle of the organization, wherever the tie-in is. The organization, I think, the majority of them that we talk to, start to realize the number of PMI-trained individuals they have, the formality and the value of the training that they have in terms of the substance, and they start seeing the 'aha' or realization moment going on, that we aren't really tapping into that resource.

04:31 JS: Of note to the DC chapter membership base, is we're working very closely with the Department of Labor and OPM, pulling together all the data now, and putting together a very comprehensive approach to ensuring that the project and program management career track is, actually, formally recognized and in the federal register. If we have that defined career track, that defined workforce within the US Federal Government, it's ultimately gonna give us one of many possible data points for people to point to and attribute that success. If we can value the project and program managers in the US Federal Government and make them more than just what we call an "accidental project and program manager," there's a lot of instances out there where we have these failures in project and program management, managed by project and program managers that have no formal training in the sector.

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05:18 JS: Basically, what we found is PMOs, those Program Management Offices, had what we called an "identity crisis". They had a very difficult time demonstrating their value, making the value proposition of the organization. People scratched their head and looked at the PMO and said, "I don't really know what goes on over there, but they're doing something." So the PMOs we've found, ultimately became more strategic. They ended up, once they've started using the self-assessment mindset, and really, basically, being the source of the learning organization in terms of collecting of lessons learned, evolving that into best practices. What we started to see was, the more successful PMOs were moving beyond those tier one budget, schedule, and scope requirements. They started looking at things that maybe were more qualitative, doing customer surveys, satisfaction surveys amongst stakeholders in the organization, trying to capture the utility of what the organization was actually deriving from the what PMO was doing in terms of delivering projects and program delivery methods, etcetera. Once you start getting those factored into it, you really start seeing the PMO smoothing that seam over between the strategy and the execution, because they're able to basically bridge a lot of those gaps.

06:19 KL: You're looking at the actual value of the output and also stakeholder expectation?

06:22 JS: Exactly.

06:23 KL: It's kind of the thing of the last decade, I think, that's being added.

06:25 JS: The world's changing at an exponentially fast rate. As a result, you have digitally empowered customers, or tax payers, on the government side, as the end user for whatever your product and service is. One voice means a lot now, in terms of what they can reach out to and do to a business. And ensuring that those are a part of the factor in the business and strategy, both internally and externally, were those qualitative measures that PMOs can do. They can really improve their effectiveness.

06:51 KL: So, because project management can approach it that way, by seeing metrics and measures in that second level of them, it's part of their industry, it's part of their craft.

07:00 JS: Exactly.

07:01 KL: That makes the agency more essentially self-aware of what they're producing, therefore a learning organization contact.

07:06 JS: Yeah, exactly. And that all ties together. And if that PMO has ability to capture what the impact is to the customer and the strategy's starting to take into account what's impacting the customer, they're providing some reportable metric and accountability on the strategy implementation. For our global executive counsel meeting, we had a C-Suite panel and they all unanimously agreed that if you're gonna be the head of a private sector, Fortune 500 organization for example, the traditional pedigree is that of an MBA. Right?

07:35 JS: Nobody argues with that, that's right. They need that business acumen, the business degree. However, those business programs are not by any means touching on the impact the project

and program management approaches can have, best practices, lessons learned, and core competencies. I actually sat next to a gentlemen from Stanford University, that's involved with their advanced project management program that they have there in the graduate level. And he even admitted that the MBA's that they send through that program for a couple of courses within the curriculum to supplement the business education they're getting in the MBA program, has specifically fed back the other satisfaction surveys, that it was actually more impactful and more useful than a lot of the stuff they are getting straight from the business side.

08:14 KL: It seems like something to start looking at in the Master's and Public Administration as well then, perhaps.

08:18 JS: Yes, that's a good point. It's a valid point. Yeah, that's a very valid point.

08:19 KL: That might gain you space.

[overlapping conversation]

08:21 JS: Yeah, absolutely.

08:23 KL: Where else would we see project management in the future in terms of industries? 'Cause part of your role is that connection in industries. Is that portfolio expanding, in terms of new ways, new places?

08:32 JS: Sure. 2013, we did a report again on the website, and available there for any of the members. It's focused on the talent management aspects and what the different pedigrees are, if you will, in terms of what makes up a good fundamental project and program manager. Three core ingredients, we call it the talent triangle. One is technical acumen and technical ability, invariably project or programs regardless of industry is gonna have some technical aspect to it. That doesn't mean you need to be the IT programmer that can program in five different languages, that doesn't make you the project manager, but having that technical acumen at least grasp the concepts, perfect. The second part is business management ability. Not everything's gonna be a portfolio management approach, but there's always a business management aspect to it, in terms of internal prioritization and resource alignment. And the last part's leadership. What we found for most organizations is the leadership aspects, those are the ones that are the most difficult to teach. As a result, 90% of organizations agree that you can teach the technical aspects. So, they look for the leadership aspects as the home grown, already built-in features of the typical project and program manager, the other aspects can be taught.

09:43 KL: The key ingredient that project managers could really have is critical thinking. That pure critical analysis and critical thinking in the way you've just described it, would fit in that leadership bucket, so that might be interesting for you guys to think of.

09:54 JS: And that's fitting into the PMI framework, really, critical thinking means you are assessing and applying what needs to be applied when it's needed.

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10:09 KL: What competitive pressures does PMI as an institute face?

10:13 JS: Organizations such as Amazon, Facebook, Google, Viacom. Some of these principal powerful brands that are really involved in very quick pace of operations. And I think the pace of technology, the pace of innovation, the start-ups and what they're doing, are ultimately gonna have an impact on our traditional approach to the project program management cycle, and how we take that and apply it, and learn from it so that we each try to stay out ahead of those issues.

10:37 KL: So, that's gonna be the pressure on the intellectual property, on the approach, on the method?

10:40 JS: Sure. Ultimately, when you have organizations that are compressing their time cycles and their time frames for projects and programs, what normally might have been for the tech sector two and three year projects for building multi-million, billion dollar data centers, heavy brick and mortar issues, they're going away from that. And if they can't stand up and complete a project in 60 to 90 days, they're not gonna touch it, 'cause they need to be faster, they need to be leaner, they need to be more agile with their practices. So trying to figure out how that compresses the approach, and how to pack in all that value from the lessons learned of the PMI framework and project program and portfolio management, to a compressed timeline that supports a innovation and start-up mindset, that's something I think proactively we're trying to get out in front of as well, too.

11:21 KL: So, given your competitive pressures, how will the membership be convinced to continue?

11:28 JS: The PMI approach to each of those different little pockets, whether it be systems engineering, tech innovation, wherever we're focusing on in terms of the intersection of project management and those specific sectors, we have the ability to be a one-size-fits-all application. The comprehensive approach that has the ability to cover what you need in terms of utilizing that critical thinking and applying what fits the situation at hand. But, there's a number of other project management professional associations around the globe, a lot of 'em are regional-based, but where we start seeing the real difference, I think, in terms of the benefit of the PMI approach, is that it's a global economy, ultimately. And the organizations that make up that global economy are looking, not just within their region, but they're looking out across oceans and continents. And those practitioners and individuals within those organizations need to be credentialed to a global standard. I think that's the tangible benefit the PMI members have over other organizations.

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12:24 KL: Special thanks to today's guest, Jordan Sims. Our theme music was composed by Molly Flannery, used with permission. Post production performed at Empowered Strategies. And technical and web support provided by Potomac Management Resources. I'm your host, Kendall Lott, and until next time, keep it in scope, and get it done.